

The International Institute for Middle-East and Balkan Studies (**IFIMES**) in Ljubljana, Slovenia, regularly analyses events in the Middle East and the Balkans. BrigGen (Ret) **Muhammad Aslam Khan Niazi**¹, PhD, (Pakistan), member of the IFIMES International Institute, has analysed the Triangulating India-Iran-Pakistan's Balance of Equation. His article entitled "**TRIANGULATING INDIA-IRAN-PAKISTAN'S BALANCE OF EQUATION**" is here published in its entirety.



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TRIANGULATING INDIA-IRAN-PAKISTAN'S BALANCE OF EQUATION

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***I was right to be wrong
While you and your kinds were wrong to be right.
---Pierre Courtade²***

Hypothesis of narrative of power of the three countries is manifestly simple in the regional setting but more one ponders about the complexities, more frustration grips once any side endeavours to relegate its conflict vulnerabilities to workable equation with the neighbours. Like Pierre Courtade's dialogue, Pakistani 'right' sounds Indian 'wrong', Iranian 'wrong' may be Indian 'right' and Indian 'wrong' may be Pakistani 'right' as one moves along and around the pivots of the triangle. Discussing Iran-India in isolation would be a parochial approach. Their foreign policy undercurrents and strategic objectives invariably crisscross, of necessity, to India, Pakistan, Iran, China and beyond.

India is relatively huge land mass. Its geo-strategic significance is established not only as a South Asian country but also as a power with massive expanding ability to influence sea-lanes in Indian Ocean and thus South East Asia and Middle Eastern countries by implications. Approaches to the Pacific, land operations in Himalayan Range, southern plains and the desert with China and Pakistan are also located within its prowess. India has a firm foot in Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia, notably Kazakhstan for energy proxy, Tajikistan and Mongolia where it now maintains military facilities that afford her better strategic orientation against the adjoining countries, Pakistan and China from the North West. Its economy leapt forward in mid 90s era and speculations abound that the centre of gravity of the 'riches' would shift to BRICS³ from the West, some placing it exclusively between

². Tony Judt, "Post War: A History of Europe Since 1945", (Vintage Books London, 2010) p. 197

³. BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

China and India. However, geo-political environments which, would remain a major threat to its expansive ambitions and adoption of the global role that some world powers would like it to embrace, not necessarily to India's advantage, acutely eclipse India's future prosperity.

The simmering Kashmir dispute with Pakistan and its corollaries like Siachen Glacier, Sir Creek and now Rivers Water Distribution can catapult the prevailing 'no war no peace' scenario, should any side lose patience. Impending war among the two would perhaps be unprecedented by the (de)merit of its horrific mutual destruction because both sides have counted each other's teeth very accurately. Indian military might is impressive while Pakistan, a much smaller country, maintains an efficient system of forces with credible nuclear deterrence. Despite being riveted by internal turmoil, it has shown remarkable astuteness to keep ready its 'steeds of war' to deter any of the perceived threats. It has remained laced with crises since inception but at the same time, it has fine-finished its ability to survive the crises as well. Whenever Pakistan was found ignorant of internal and external build up of storms, and its leadership failed to rise to the occasion, it paid an exorbitant price. India imposed such 'price' on it, at least once before during the final phases of cutting Pakistan to size. Obviously, the reference is to the debacle of erstwhile East Pakistan.

India's territorial dispute with China could develop into a formal conflict if it fits the design of capturing geo-political space by either power. Sujit Dutta comments euphemistically but with visible concern, downplaying the stand off as 'competition' only, "China and India straddle a common geopolitical space across the Himalayas and South and Southeast Asia. This makes for strategic and geopolitical competition."⁴ The remarks, from the point of view of International Relations are simply in the domain of liberalism, but the followers of 'Realist' approaches would side line such comments in the light of ground realities. The ensuing dilemma from these realities has forced a compulsion on the Indian hierarchy to maintain a potent military system to react to or eliminate these threats, which the war evaluations prove, it cannot. It sounds like war mongering. However, it is very heartening that powers to the disputes have come to recognize the base line wisdom and that is, wars alone cannot resolve the conflicts⁵ though the 'guns' have been branded as the final argument of the kings historically. David Scott concludes in his essay, "Finally... some competition between India and China is likely to continue within regional organizations, in the diplomatic arena, within their military and economic strategies;

⁴. Sujit Dutta, "China's Emerging Power and Military Role: Implications for South Asia", in Jonathan Pollack and Richard Yang, eds., "In China's Shadow: Regional Perspectives on Chinese Foreign Policy and Military Development", (Santa Monica: RAND, 1998), p. 92.

⁵. Indian Minister of Home Affairs, Shri P. Chidambaram appears inclined however, to support 'war' option to resolve issues with Pakistan as he hurled an open threat on June 8, 2011. Being an optimist, I still see lesser graveside of his thunder that aimed possibly at an opposition BJP leader who had expressed shock a day earlier over the scale of Indian forces atrocities committed in Kashmir.

and with it their elements of mutual balancing, and above all hedging. However, neither state will want to antagonize the other too much, both will want to maintain their own long term grand strategies of peaceful rise and economic modernization...".⁶ Nevertheless, Indian forces have to maintain a superb state of readiness to cater for the worst contingencies but that unfortunately means sinking billions of taxpayers' dollars every year that could be well spent productively elsewhere instead of rattling the sabers. Any attempt to lower the guards by sliding back from the build up of war arsenals may be even more risky within the riddle of maintaining a 'balance of power', and the resultant encroachment upon India's luster as a huge customer of the modern weaponry with its ability to pay in dollars instantly.

The sound and burgeoning economy tends to intensify the territorial lust of any state, if also cajoled by its civil society, to adopt a role that transcends the geographical borders. In other words, the virus of lebensraum, catching up with the appetite for seeking expansion or recognition of their influence among the comity of nations can afflict any prosperous nation. India, in a bid to survive the crunch of fading oil and gas reserves is likely to be vulnerable to committing military adventurism by mid 21st Century, what Japan did against Pearl Harbour, to sustain its military as well as economic might. This is particularly worrisome and the possibilities, if not probabilities, heighten when some leading powers are already showing the symptom of morality collapse under such desire and have come to deal with certain theaters in Eurasia in a manner that is not finding due legitimacy despite their ardent desire to paint them as such.

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India now is a regional power but its markers on the world map reach far and wide. The role it yearns as a world power, particularly on the high seas and in the space does not find adequate means but even the pipe dreams can materialize if the leadership perseveres in attaining the objectives. Knowing the ambitious sides of Indian build up, other than its traditional rivals, China and Pakistan, two powers, Australia and Indonesia can throw their tentacles up as a preemption strategy. Gary Smith visibly circumvents Australia's Indian fears through the entire length of his essay but he puts across indirectly, which sometimes sounds more valid than direct. He comments, "The uranium trade plays directly into two of the major regional and global problems: the traditional concern of military security/insecurity...".⁷ About Australia, it is not only the war of caricatures now. Australia has Herculean tasks ahead to keep engaged not only China and India simultaneously but also China and America as well when the 'national interests' pull is divergent between them. Some of their taught syllabi advocate, "Australia's strategic relationship with America has always been fundamentally different from the old strategic relationship with Britain,

⁶. David Scott 'Sino-Indian Security Predicaments for the Twenty-First Century', 'Asian Security' (Journal), 2008, 4:3, p.265

⁷. Gary Smith 'Australia and the rise of India', Australian Journal of International Affairs, 2010, 64: 5, p.570

in that the British relationship was a matter of identity, and the US relationship was based on interests.”⁸ More the Australian relationship would deepen with US and India, more ominous strain it would cast on China and other subsystems that are well poised to meet the challenge, thus making it a complex tangle.

From the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), however, India has managed an effective image profile, obfuscating that she focuses on the development of trade relations and fostering peace though it also implicates power game as well as its power projection. Staging a counter deception perhaps, Australia and Indonesia particularly, have pretended to look the other way but not remaining lax about her naval and nuclear expansion. Should India be stuck across the waterways by drawing their disapproval if not full-blown rivalry, it would make Indian tasks insurmountable. In other words, India would be a victim of backlash of its own build up. Seeing Europe somewhat critical of US ‘go alone’ ventures and cis-trans-Atlantic alliance’s ride becoming bumpy, certain quarters are already advocating a new axis between India, America, Israel and Australia (IAIA).⁹ Japan and New Zealand could be fifth and sixth candidates but it would be hard to keep Japan in America’s fold if at any stage its relations smoothen out with China or Russia over the disputed ocean spaces. New Zealand would be better advised by its friends to stay away from the conundrum. Briefly said, India has the wherewithal to emerge as a power with global role but not without heavy baggage of severe frustrations. Conversely, Indian diplomacy, an important instrument of foreign policy, in regional setting, more so about Pakistan and Iran, is vibrant from Indian perspective but within the globalize environments, it has some severe critics, even at home who rate it a victim of sheer ambivalence. Harsh V. Pant (not as harsh as Sikri is towards Pakistan) and Rajiv Sikri belong to realists and traditionalists school of thought respectively. The former laments India’s ambivalence towards US, advocating to take bold leaps in foreign policy conduct, the latter bitterly criticizes such mode of falling in the lap of US, perhaps at the expense of not clearing mine fields for its diplomacy in ‘near abroad’. Ian Hall comments about Sikri, “The region, he thinks, displays remarkable commonality of cultural practices; its divisions, in other words, stem not so much from cultural distinction but political decision.”¹⁰ Here the hint appears to division of the Subcontinent in August 1947 that became the bedrock of disputes and hostilities. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had observed over six decades ago (1946), “The factors that laid the foundation of

⁸. ‘*Graduate Studies in Strategy and Defence*’ (a Course Guide-2011), School of International, Political and Strategic Studies, ANU College, Strategic & Defence Studies Centre of Asia & the Pacific, <http://ips.cap.anu.edu.au/sdsc/gssd>, (accessed on 10 May 2011).

⁹. The alphabets (IAIA), if pronounced one by one, sound Urdu, meaning incidentally as, ‘welcome, welcome’.

¹⁰. Ian Hall, “*The other exception? India as a rising power*”, Australian Journal of International Affairs, 2010, 64: 5, p. 606

Islam in Indian society and created a powerful following have become victim of politics of partition.”¹¹ Thus, according to such generalizations, territorial disputes between India and Pakistan and to a certain extent include China as well; are of lesser consequences than the psychological barriers of hearts and minds among them, gaining height with the lapse of each year. Muslims have endured a level of genocide at the time of partition and its horror still lurks on the horizon. Concluding a chapter on ‘Black Death’ that devastated Europe in mid fourteenth century, Cathie Carmichael comments, “Every Jew, Muslim, atheist or Christian who died at this time as a result of being targeted for his or her faith or ethnicity was an individual with his or her own unique martyrdom”¹². One would expect from the leaders who steer the destinies of the masses to obviate such tragedies, occurring to the minorities in the Subcontinent, though history is witness that states seldom learn from past determinants of genocide. In fact, the most enduring bond, a sage said, among the brothers has been the ‘sword’.

Iran with its potent hydrocarbon reserves has significant weight in the domain of geopolitics. It maintains a long coastal line on Arabian Sea as well as Persian Gulf that act as trade lanes for huge stocks of oil and gas and thus gain geo-strategic significance. It is essentially a Middle Eastern country, but at the same time, a Caspian littoral and also contiguous to Central as well as South Asia. Before Soviets ‘phantasmagoria’, it shared borders with the Soviet Union.¹³ India and Iran have had the history of looking in opposite directions. During the royal era when Iran was embedded deep in the Western, read American, alliance, it leaned more towards Pakistan because of similarities in their geo-strategic priorities. India, on the other hand, inclined towards Soviet Union and pursuing course of non-aligned bloc at the same time, was not Iran’s choice obviously, when India’s energy thirst had also not exacerbated yet.

On the fall of Shah of Iran, the succeeding theocracy attempted to grasp the ‘leadership’ role among Muslim ‘Ummah’ and hence India-Iran relations remained cool. Iranian support for Kashmir cause was an impediment. The growth of US-Iran polarization and ensuing sanctions through ‘Iran, Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA 1996)’ forced Iran to break American cordon by looking towards China, India and Russia for its strategic assets safeguards and to parry off Israeli and Western wrath that she

¹¹. Shorish Kashmiri, ‘*Richness and Depth of Vision*’, an interview with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in “Chattan”, (Matbooaat-e Chattan Lahore n.d. April 1946).

¹². Cathie Carmichael, “Genocide before the Holocaust”, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009) p.160

¹³. If one sees Iranian northern boundaries and its claim over the Caspian Sea status as unresolved, Iran is well within its right to claim sharing Caspian borders with Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, as well as Azerbaijan.

feared by implications. Neutral observers blame Iran for some self-inflicted wounds in the international arena. "While right to tap nuclear energy as a source and shrewd option to explore alternatives for her enormous but fast dwindling oil and gas reserves cannot be denied, it is also encumbered as a responsible member to allay international fears and move along the wind rather than flexing muscles in confrontational manner."¹⁴ For Iran, India was yet another lucrative window for breaking the US noose, which now imports 14% of its energy needs from Iran. In return, India-Iran sounded comfortable with each other when Iran ebbed down its Kashmir rhetoric. Their relations could plummet on conclusion of US-India and Indo-Israel dialogues of strategic collusion but the mutual fears were downplayed by Iran as a geopolitical expediency. However, Indian reluctance to render her support on nuclear issue at IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) to Iran and by abstaining from the November 2010 UN vote that condemned Iran on question of Human Rights, have made the job of diplomats of both the countries too perplexing to mend the fences.

As if, it was not enough. Indian ambivalence to join in contemplated Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project has also exposed vulnerabilities of their souring relations. The Iranian leadership has come to see India clearly fixated by US and Israel, an assumption perhaps not very valid to stand the test of expert scrutiny. Indian rejection of US tenders worth \$11 Billions equipment deal¹⁵ last April proves that India generally could not be spoon fed by her allies and would jealously guard its ability to steer foreign policy course without strings, compatible to its national interests. Here, the likes of Rajiv Sikri have won. The decision must have taken wind out of US incentives of the times while granting India concessions on acquiring advanced nuclear technology and fuel from the nuclear club. US might have been relishing ever since the scenario of launching India as a counterweight to China in the Indian Ocean as well as Pacific and the potentials of India being a huge modern weaponry market that US would love to secure. The shock's apparent casualty was the US ambassador to New Delhi; Mr. Timothy Roemer who resigned for 'personal' as well as 'professional' reasons. Yet another surprise is that India is turning to Europe and not even to its traditional supplier, Russia though Russia protested discreetly, as some reports suggest, by withdrawing its bid for supply of weapons to India. The shift aspect, relevant to the topic, would have far-reaching consequences by lending India an added maneuver space to keep Iran engaged successfully and perhaps Pakistan also, including on Kashmir issue. Iran and Pakistan are glued together by the sort that dries up in a day and revitalizes the next day when Indo-centric concerns are always dominant factors to count. The two countries interact frankly and informally.

¹⁴. Brig (Retired) Dr. Muhammad Aslam Khan Niazi (Makni), *"The New Great Game: Oil and Gas Politics in Central Eurasia"*, (Raider Publishing International, New York. London and Swansea, 2008), p.192.

¹⁵. "India rejects U.S. tender", *"The News International"*, Pakistan, 28 April 2011.

Iran has some grievances against Pakistan; the main perhaps its tilt to Middle Eastern actors and US with whom Iran has direct or indirect territorial or ideological standoff but finds hard to ditch Pakistan at the same time. Iranian President, Mr. Ahmadinejad's recent claim (08 June 2011) to have known a US plot that aims at denuclearization of Pakistan is a sincere revelation that validates such a predominant conviction, already prevailing among the entire Muslim 'Ummah'. In the regional context, US mean now a full team, comprising US, India, Israel, Russia and NATO collaborators versus Pakistan as their thrust lines converge in strategic dimension, a paradigm hard to admit by them but a reality nevertheless. India has the ability to nourish its Middle Eastern diplomacy by driving a wedge among Iran and others further deep to conduct chicanery of its exterior maneuvers.

There may be another twist in the Indian perception that Iran is failing to register and that is its impending demographic explosion and corresponding aggravating energy thirst. Robert Kaplan comments, "India -- soon to become the world's fourth-largest energy consumer, after the United States, China, and Japan -- is dependent on oil for roughly 33 percent of its energy needs, 65 percent of which it imports. And 90 percent of its oil imports could soon come from the Persian Gulf. India must satisfy a population that will, by 2030, be the largest of any country in the world."¹⁶ Indian energy imports from other Middle East countries, measure up to about 45% of its total needs as compared to 14% from Iran (some sources figures vary). When Iran's nuclear venture is suspected among the Middle East countries and its role seen clearly as a force trying to unhinge the ruling hierarchies of its neighbors in the wake of recent uprising in North Africa and Middle East, India has the option to weigh gains and losses. By playing cool, India reaps the advantage of ensuring that its energy lifeline remains green and large numbers of its expatriates' remittances from the Middle East fill her coffers.

For Sudha Ramachandran, however, India needs to focus still at Iran when she writes, "With Pakistan refusing India overland access to Afghanistan, Iran is key to India's land access to there and beyond to Central Asia.... Besides, at times Delhi is concerned over the resurgence of Taliban; can India afford to lose an important ally in Iran on Afghan issue?"¹⁷ The statement clearly affords an insight to possible magnitude of 'cooperation' between India and some Taliban faction(s) through Iranian influence in Afghanistan. It also reveals the level of advocacy to accord, alternative access route through Iran to Afghanistan and Central Asia, a high priority tag as compared to remaining warmed up with Middle East for the sake of energy and expatriates' remittances even though they are sizeable. However, Sudha Ramachandran prescription has limited scope as she envisions the immediate crucial

¹⁶. Robert Kaplan, 'Center Stage for the 21st Century: Rivalry in the Indian Ocean', 'Foreign Affairs', April 2009 (accessed at RealClearPolitics website on 22 April 2011).

¹⁷. Sudha Ramachandran, "India-Iran relations at nadir", Asia Times (www.atimes.com), December 4, 2010.

spaces and ignores the global obligations India has to meet. Indian's Iran embrace could resist US as well as Israel with whom it collaborates strategically, but for the Middle Eastern countries and Europe combined, she would find dent to her image unmanageable because of Iran once its own nuclear posturing and refusal to sign Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is yet not out of the woods. Her arguments would have been even weightier, had she not, wittingly or unwittingly, downplayed Indo-Iranian forces operational level collusion. "Some experts see this as part of broad strategic cooperation between two powers in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea...India had reportedly hoped the Declaration (Indo-Iran of January 2003) would pave the way for Indian sales to Iran of upgrades of Iran's Russian-made conventional weapons systems". The same report further dilates at another place, "It is perhaps because of Indo-Iranian cooperation in stabilizing Afghanistan that Tajikistan—a Persian speaking Central Asian state bordering Afghanistan — allows Indian combat aircrafts to use its Farkhor air base. There are reports that India will soon also be allowed to use Tajikistan's Aini air base as well."¹⁸ Iranian influence made the difference for India.

Pakistan and perhaps China as well as Central Asians view Indo-Iranian collaboration in Afghanistan as unnatural or rather too lavish in full view of their antagonists, if not hostile neighbors. Iran has to understand that India needs Iran and it would gravitate on its energy bait relentlessly, giving Iran an impression at the same time that she stands by it despite US disapproval. IAEA axis, when allies would maintain forces preponderance for the Gulf energy security against Iranian wish in the Gulf by force if necessary, shall rupture Indo-Iranian 'close' relationship mirage in a nasty way. "But for a non-Jew to challenge that American and Israeli interests are identical is to invite the charge of anti-Semitism, which has been the kiss of death politically since the holocaust."¹⁹ India is safely in the same bracket now. Iran would not gulp down Israeli threat behind Indian smoke screen on its borders with Afghanistan. Under these circumstances when US-Israel-India draw more closer because of their wider convergence of global priorities, Iran would have no option but to restrict Indian access to its seaport of Chah Bahar that India is helping it to develop, cutting at the same time Indian roots in Tajikistan as well as Afghanistan. Pakistan would remain comfortable anyway, because of its loyal 'Pathan' belt on its western borders with Afghanistan that could not be subverted ever since partition. However, some powers with heavy stakes are keen to ignite this strategic asset called ethnic 'pukhtoons' against Pakistan by bribing and equipping an odd tribal segment in adjoining Afghan

¹⁸. K. Alan Kronstadt and Kenneth Katzma, "India-Iran Relations and U.S. Interests", 'CRS Report for Congress', Order Code RS 22486, August 2, 2006, (<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/70294.pdf>, (accessed on 18 May 2011) p. 6

¹⁹. Theodore P. Wright, "Indo-Israel Relations and the Concept of National Interest in Multi Ethnic/Religious States" in 'FPRC Journal-5', (accessed at Foreign Policy Research Centre, New Delhi website on 20 April, 2011)

border areas through moles that portray perfect 'turban and beard' combination. Such a degree of 'loyalty' consolation for Pakistan through historic incidence however, has to be nurtured and sustained laboriously for which Pakistan is putting little effort and eroding its own reservoir of strength under aliens' pressure.

It is an interesting paradox, when India did incessant finger pointing to Pakistan for indulging in illegal nuclear proliferation (Dr. A Q Khan episode), Indian scientists were helping Iran on possible enrichment techniques. According to Wall Street Journal, in September 2004 determination, two Indian nuclear scientists were sanctioned against under the INA (Iran Non-proliferation Act), Dr. Chaudhary Surendar and Dr. Y.S.R. Prasad. The two formerly headed the Nuclear Power Corp of India and allegedly passed to Iran heavy-water nuclear technology.²⁰ At least four or five other Indian chemical and engineering companies faced sanctions or threat of sanctions in 2005 by US on similar transfer violations to Iran in nuclear and missile technology field under INA. Grant Pakistan that when it faced an avalanche of Indian propaganda, hardly any one in Pakistan blew trumpet of Indian complicity with Iran, out of sheer laziness of its diplomatic corps or its urge to build bridges of understanding with India!

It remains clear that Pakistani leadership, embroiled in survival war with opposing political parties has not been able to cash on such/similar profitable themes to gain a diplomacy edge internationally as does India, whenever situation presents her an opportunity. Killing of Osama bin Laden was still wrapped in a mystery but India clinched Pakistan by throat to label it as the harbinger of global terrorism on the same day, 02 May 2011. The allegation came like a bolt from India and even US who are very weak in simple arithmetic and are not impressed by five times more Pakistani forces personnel and civilians falling martyrs than theirs all combined, spilling blood for US war on terror. Such an ill timed and possibly, a deliberate barrage, if spared for a while, could permit the two countries moving closer for chalking out an agenda of reconciliation. The cool of cricket diplomacy, which Indian Prime Minister achieved so assiduously, vanished overnight. Demolishing the bridges among the states has been the easiest narrative historically than building ones. Ephemeral gestures of reconciliation India makes occasionally have fast become the fuel for added fury, which, India and Pakistan can ill afford to suffer for a long time. Recent inconclusive talks on Sir Creek and Siachen issues in May 2011 were least followed by the Pakistani public, with foregone assumption that it was a mere gimmickry, aimed at securing credibility reservoir from 'peace-seeking-Western world' and a ploy to further isolate Pakistan.

²⁰. John Larkin and Jay Solomon, "*India's Ties With Iran Pose Challenge for U.S.*," 'Wall Street Journal', March 28, 2005

On Pakistan domestic front, mega corruption scandal breaks cover almost every fortnight, forcing its top leadership to go out of breath to defend it. Within weeks when judiciary comes in to play its role, instead of recovering from the shame, they embark on the monstrous campaign to defy the highest courts because the corruption tales in Pakistan explored by the media are more or less always true. It is not the bad governance only but some opposition parties are also corrupt to the roots and 'cooperate' with the Government after securing big share in the deals. In all probability, while Pakistan Army, Judiciary and Media are reassuring icons, the country has the potentials to wriggle out of the crises.

Indo-Iranian collaboration on trade and military cooperation in the presence of serious Indo-Pak territorial irritants and perceptual gulf would remain a concern, not only for Pakistan but for China as well. Coupled with it, Indian image as a factor for inducing instability in Pakistan from its Eastern as well as Western borders, perhaps as counter stroke to 'Jihadis' operations in Kashmir is extremely disturbing, when the pointers also prove US nod to India if not active support from Afghan territory. Tiff between US-Pakistan on the magnitude of war on terror and 'do more' syndrome haunts every Pakistani because it is unrealistic as well as impracticable. Intelligentsia in Pakistan clearly perceives that prolongation of the war on terror in Afghanistan is a mere farce to defile it or at least force Pakistan to give up its nuclear arsenals that it possesses as a solitary Muslim power. The scenario is horrible to conceive but there is graceful diplomatic maneuver space available if both the countries heed to the reason rather than making recourse to the ruses contrived by some war mongering think-tank, known for their prejudice and bias.

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For India, to assume the status of 21st Century economic giant, its energy thirst would not satiate unless it resolves its dispute with Pakistan. Its strategic significance far exceeds than that of Iran when it would need every drop of oil and gas, possibly from Iran as well as Central Asia. Until Pakistan acts as an energy bridge and Damocles sword of internal and external threats are not taken off Pakistan, Indian economic boom would face severe eclipse. India may well argue that Pakistan's internal problems are of its own making or their resolution at least its own prerogative but the fact remains that there is so much of arms twisting and intrusion in its internal affairs that even US officials had the tongue in cheeks to openly admit, yes, our operators are there in Pakistan. Raymond Davis saga renders all speculations on the contrary to rest. Within the wider game, India needs to reassess its ambitions by recalling that as a poor but relatively ethics based country, it enjoyed far more respect even in bipolar world of Cold War era. With economic boom and lager stocks of guns, missiles and munitions, logically, its reach and recognition would have taken longer strides but it has not. All its direct neighbours except Bhutan, a protectorate, maintain uneasy relationship with India, is a coincidence worth reckoning. Is it the lack of will to mend fences with the neighbours or too much of a flare for courting distant actors who would see India supplementing their own designs at the cost of wreaking miseries to Indian masses?

The technology that is pushing globalization to the zenith, is also making the inter states relations transparent. Cloak and dagger policies, no matter who the executioners are, would seldom remain covert in the coming years; wikileaks may be a small demonstration only. The dichotomy in acts and facts, when the big powers in 21st Century were to be more benign towards the planet if not the humanity, is exaggerating. The irony is that the most powerful states that have grown beyond measures in annihilating capabilities are showing strong tendencies of eliminating the reconciliatory approaches, whatever the pretexts, in reverse ratio that bodes catastrophic for breathing space of the developing countries. China, Iran, India and Pakistan are high on the graph periphery that could be sucked in by the centripetal character of the tornado of violence in pursuit of 'narrow or aliens' objectives. While India and China have history of recovering from the brink, Pakistan and Iran are more vulnerable and would need to stand guard to preempt such follies.

Some conclusions are pertinent to draw:

- India as a power in military spectrum has immense emerging influence not only in the Subcontinent but also as far as China and Australia to the East and to Gulf of Aden to the West. While India would welcome seamless cooperation from the countries within this space, they would need equal, if not more, Indian cooperation as well in the process of its improved power potentials from regional to extra regional capability. Iran, Indonesia, Australia, China and Pakistan, if not on board with India, can inflict severe dent to the perceived Indian hegemony.
- India-Iran relations figure out prominently in the sphere of trade and at forces operational levels. Conceiving any military alliance with Iran as of today, does not fit in the Indian wider considerations. However, its cordial relations with Iran might prevent Iran to be studded on, as some Pentagon officials call it, the 'string of pearls' or 'pearls necklace' but 'noose for India', engineered by China. In other words, the Iranian seaports in Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, being vital for energy security, shall emerge as a subject from covert to overt diplomacy when China and India would bid for their naval use or lien in the event of any collapse of energy security environments. Iran in this context would not oblige India but China instead, not because India does not mean any importance to her but in energy security setting, Iran would see India more as a US ally and China, its all weathers choice. To woo Iranian favor for energy supplies, India has to walk on the tight rope and maintain balance with US, Israel and other Middle Eastern countries that would turn it as suspect if diplomacy cards were not played judiciously.

- Kashmir is the mother of all disputes and mistrust between India and Pakistan. After having fought three short wars and Kargil misadventure, Pakistan has to remain committed to its viable resolution, according to the wishes of People of Kashmir. Lingering Kashmir dispute is dangerous more for India than for Pakistan, particularly when the Subcontinent, Middle East, Central Asia, Caucasus, Russia and at some stage China as well, can integrate on European Union (EU) pattern that would herald tremendous peace, tranquillity and hence prosperity. After India-Pakistan possible patch up, no reason remains in the fold why Pakistan should not become Energy Bridge for India as well as South East Asia. Iran, Caspian littorals and other Central Asians would be in the line by choice.
- Indian Government needs to ensure effective public awareness so that the ruling as well as opposition parties support India-Pakistan reconciliatory overtures and ditching the dialogue does not become electioneering agenda. It fuels anti Pakistan sentiments and India has it in abundance. Too much of vitriol is pumped into masses to demonize Pakistan that is usually resorted to hype the war phobia before launching full-fledged offensives. India has the prerogative to do so if she foresees hostilities in short term. If not, she should commit herself to douse the flames.
- Tension with Iran developed because of extra regional considerations and Indian obligation to support its allies. The alliances surfaced because India was not comfortable with neighbours including China. Chinese conduct in the international arena has remained pragmatic, fostering peace. Indo-China disputes are there but not so complicated that these cannot be resolved. After all they have been, 'Hindi-Cheanee bhai bhai' that translates 'people of India and China are brothers to each other'. It only needs a stock of pragmatism from Indian side and well-intentioned diplomacy away from the distant alliances spectre while on Chinese side India would find it in plenty. Friendly dance together is possible. Any side that makes the first move would enjoy moral ascendancy. It thus becomes imperative that India takes wind out of international meddling in this part of the world that is thriving on Indo-China 'competition'. Inward coalescing of Russia, China, Middle East, Caucasus, Central Asia, South Asia, South East Asia, further on to Australia makes a fantastic dream for free trading space. History has it that some grand accomplishments were perceived as dreams to start with. All actors need to take cue from EU, which has amongst them, not only brute memories but some lingered on as well.
- Iran has to adopt a flexible approach toward the regional as well as world issues. Its anti US and anti Israel jargons hit no one else but Iran. Obliteration of Israel is her fantasy, far removed from reality. She must reconcile with

impracticable ideal by sponsoring peace and harmony. Reconciled Iran would not only be more prosperous and ardently sought for power but also the one that makes its friends' task much easier in give and take deals. "Discreet pragmatism would enable her to prove an assumption wrong, what Fred Halliday said about Iran, 'condemned to react, unable to influence'."²¹ Conversely, Israel has emerged as a trusted ally of the US and now of India as well. Instead of setting up snares for the surrounding as well as distant countries including Iran and Pakistan, Israel is best advised to knock out two issues. It must grant Palestine a statehood that is ultimately to the benefit of Israel and return the 1967-captured territories to its neighbors. Instead of taking pleasure in demeaning US President, Barak Obama on Palestinians issue, it must regret its obstinacy for not picking up the advice of its most trusted benefactor, America. On the other hand, one sees a remarkable change that Muslims are prepared to work with Israel if these two obstacles were removed. India, as an allied country should exert its influence on Israel for helping Palestinians whose supporter, India remained for long time during Cold War era. Any success in this direction would render its standing tall with Arabs.

- Pakistan has tremendous heap of homework to accomplish and there is light/hope on the long end side. It needs to reassess the circumstances that have pushed it to the precipice of internal turmoil and portrayed it as the subject of international conspiracies despite its rich dossier of decades' long loyalties against the utopian ideology. It must pursue a policy within the ambit of recognized international relations, free of the gridlocks clamped by the powers that embrace it today and kick it out the next day. Resolution of imminent conflict scenarios by applying soft power while maintaining impeccable military deterrence would be the best option. Spare no effort that fosters honourable peace with the immediate neighbours, cordial relations with Muslim countries and equitable ties with all major powers.

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²¹ . Dr. Makni, op cit, p. 193